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Dr Benjamin Heath K.

AN

EXAMEN

OF THE

NEW COMEDY,

CALL'D

The SUSPICIOUS HUSBAND.

WITH

Some *Observations*

UPON OUR

Dramatick Poetry and *Authors*;

To which is added,

A Word of Advice to Mr. G--*rr*--*ck*;

and a Piece of SECRET *History.*

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-Lane.*

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DEAR GEORGE,

YOU'LL be very much ſurprized to receive a printed Anſwer to your laſt Letter; but I ſhall clear up this Myſtery in a few Words, and at the ſame Time beg your Pardon for not adviſing you of my Deſign, before I enter'd the Preſs.——You muſt know I lodge with a Bookſeller, a very intelligent converſable Man; to him I communicated your Letter and my Anſwer; he ſpoke favourably of the following Remarks, and with a modeſt Smile aſk'd me, if I had any Objection to their appearing in Print; he told me they were written upon very popular Subjects, and might be of Service to him.——I own to you I ſtartled at firſt with

with the Thoughts of commencing Author; but I was eaſily flatter'd out of my Fears, and ſoon perſuaded to give my Conſent. Now whether my Vanity, or my Regard to my Landlord, has drawn me into this Scrape, I ſhall leave to you, and my other Friends (who have nothing elſe to do) to determine: However, 'tis now too late to conſider Conſequences, for *Jacta eſt alea*; and ſo, have at you.

The new *Comedy* called the *Suſpicious Husband* (which the Town has ſo much admired, and ſo impatiently expected in Print) was publiſh'd ſome time ago; I have ſent it you, and as you ſo earneſtly deſire my Opinion, I ſhall give it you without Reſerve; but at the ſame Time I muſt inſiſt, that you ſend me *your* Thoughts upon it, without the leaſt Complaiſance to my Judgment. I have had the Advantage of ſeeing it well acted, (which I always thought the beſt Comment upon any Dramatick Performance) ſo there may be many Paſſages which delight me, by carrying the Action in my Mind as I read 'em, that may not have the ſame Effect upon you; however, I ſhall be much deceived if you are not greatly entertain'd with the Whole.—You and I have often communicated our Thoughts to each other upon Dramatick

Poetry,

Poetry, and particularly upon Comedy; we generally agreed in our Notions, and were unfashionable enough to arraign the Taste and Writings of our modern Authors: I flatter myself that the *Suspicious Husband* is of our Side the Question; but I shall proceed to my Remarks, and shall speak my Mind freely and impartially; not with the usual Conceit of a Critick, but with a strong Desire to be better inform'd by you, or any Body else.—— The Town, tho' greatly pleas'd by the Representation of this new Comedy, was doubtful whether it wou'd answer Expectation in the Reading; but I believe the Point is now settled, and it is agreed by all, that it is not only an *acting* but a *reading* Play. The Author has imitated No-body; he has boldly ventur'd to give us a pure and simple Representation of Nature; his *Plot* is admirably contriv'd; it thickens every Act; the *Incidents* rise upon each other with the greatest Intricacy, Entertainment, and Probability; no intervening Scenes cool the main Action, but the Mind is kept in the most perplexing and agreeable Suspence; all the Parts have an immediate Connection and Dependance upon each other; the Third and Fourth Acts are a continual Laugh from the Beginning to the End; and when you imagine you foresee the Business of the Fifth, you

are

are ſurprized with new Turns: The *Denouement* or *Cataſtrophe* (which is generally ſo careleſsly work'd up ev'n in our beſt Plays, and is the more difficult as the preceding Acts are more intereſting) is here moſt artfully manag'd; every Circumſtance is unravelled with Spirit and Conviction; and tho' *Ranger* (in order to ſupport Mrs. *Strictland*'s Character) is oblig'd to recapitulate his Adventures (which the Audience being acquainted with, is very dangerous at the End of a Play) yet he does it in ſo conciſe and lively a manner, and at the ſame Time ſo agreeably torments the Huſband, and brings about ſo natural a Reconciliation, that I know no Part of the Comedy more entertaining, or that gives the Minds of the Spectators ſo full, ſo mix'd and ſo unexpected a Satisfaction: You will wonder perhaps what I mean by a *mix'd* Satisfaction; you muſt know Sir, that amidſt all the Mirth which is occaſioned by *Ranger* in the Fifth Act, there are ſome few Strokes of Tenderneſs in the Character of the Huſband, that will force Tears into your Eyes: The Art of the Author is much to be admir'd in theſe accidental Touches of Nature; they make the Character of *Strictland* more pleaſing, give a delightful Variety to the Scenes, and a greater Probability to his ſudden Change of Diſpoſition; for by giving

him

him this *Feeling*, he appears capable of Conviction, willing to be undeceiv'd, and ready upon good Proofs to make all proper Acknowledgments to his Wife; without this *Feeling*, his Converſion would have been improbable, and by being Brutally obſtinate with his Suſpicion, he muſt have appeared a moſt unamiable Character. I own to you, I think our dramatick Poets have been too fond of reforming their principal Characters at the End of their Plays; but *Strictland*'s Converſion and Reconciliation are the immediate and natural Conſequences of the Plot; and Mrs. *Strictland*'s Innocence is ſo evidently clear'd by a Chain of Facts, that he cannot have the *leaſt Hinge or Loop to hang a Doubt on.* In ſhort, I will venture to ſay, no Comedy in the Language is more completely wound up, or more conſiſtent to the laſt. So much for the *Plot*, and now for the *Characters.*——There are two new Characters in the Play, and a Sketch of a third—*Ranger* who is the Life and Soul of the whole, is a complete Character, and well preſerv'd from Beginning to the End:

——— *Servatur ad imum*
Qualis ab incæpto, &c.

He is a wild, ſpirited young Fellow, led away by his Paſſions, runs great Lengths to indulge 'em, and yet never ſo blinded

by 'em, as to loſe Sight of his Honour: I know no Part in Comedy more natural or entertaining; he neither ſays or does any Thing out of Character, and is ſo pleaſant a Rattle, that you very readily excuſe his Follies, for the Sake of his Virtues; the Author as judiciouſly preſerves this Character's Turn of Mind to the laſt, as he alters *Strictland*'s: The Reformation of the one wou'd have been improbable and impertinent, that of the other is neceſſary and natural: *Ranger*'s Courſe of Pleaſure was not yet run, he was in his full Career, and to have ſtopt him ſhort, wou'd have been dangerous; however, through all his Wildneſs, he ſhews a noble Spirit and a good Heart to the laſt; he rejoices at the End of the Play, in being the Inſtrument of *Bellamy*'s and *Frankly*'s Happineſs, but at the ſame time whiſpers 'em, *I had rather you ſhou'd be married than I, for all that:* This is keeping the *Ruling Paſſion* (as Mr. *Pope* calls it) to the laſt. I muſt make one Reflection upon this Character before I leave it; he is ſo much approv'd of by the Men, and ſo agreeable to the Ladies, that I am afraid we ſhall have every Coxcomb about Town fancy himſelf a *Ranger*; but I would have every ignorant Pretender know, that his Vices are merely the Shade of the Picture, and only deſign'd as the Foil to his great Spirit, Underſtanding,

Underſtanding, and Honour. — As I have ſet out with a Declaration of being impartial, I will tell you ſome Objections I have to a few Things ſaid by this favourite Character.

In the firſt Scene with *Frankly* and *Bellamy*, this ſomewhat indelicate Queſtion is aſk'd him.

Frankly—*But you look ſadly—What, no Mercileſs Jade has — has She?*
Ranger — *No no, ſound as a Roach.*

This ſurely is a coarſe Idea made more unpalatable, by a vulgar Expreſſion. And a little after *Ranger* ſays,

If She had been one of Us, *&c.*

This is the Cant Phraſe of a mere *Covent-Garden* Rake, and below the Gentility of *Ranger*. But theſe are little Blemiſhes, *quas incuria fudit*, and which are only made more conſpicuous, by the Purity of Language and Chaſtneſs of Thought that runs through the reſt of the Play.

I think if he omitted an Oath or two (tho' I confeſs he raps 'em out in a good Cauſe) he would not be leſs ſpirited and genteel: Oaths are at preſent very juſtly excluded the Converſation of the truly Po-

lite; they are the wretched Expletives of the ignorant and abandon'd; and I would not have 'em become faſhionable again, by being often in the Mouth of ſo pretty a Fellow; however, if they are neceſſary, I think it lies in the Actor's Power (by not being ſo emphatical upon 'em) to *ſoften 'em off* (in the Painter's Phraſe) and not ſuffer theſe coarſer Features to *come out* ſo ſtrongly. When *Ranger* is in Mrs. *Strictland's* Dreſſing-Room, and the Maid is turn'd out for being impertinent: He ſays, *What a lucky Dog am I! I never made a Gentleman a Cuckold before!* There is an Indelicacy in this too, that diſpleaſes me, and I could wiſh it alter'd. Perhaps I am too Critical in this; but if you wont give me leave to be over-nice now and then, I ſhall have few Opportunities to convince you of my Impartiality — The Character of the *Suſpicious Huſband* is well drawn, and new. We had a Report before the Play was acted, that *Strictland* reſembled *Pinchwife*; but ſure no two Perſons with a Taint of the ſame Paſſion can be more unlike; and he may as well be compar'd to *Othello*, or *Ford* in the *Merry Wives of Windſor*, becauſe each of thoſe Characters are affected with Jealouſy. I have mentioned above, the Tenderneſs of this Character, and, in my Opinion, there are more Maſterly Strokes in him than in any other Part of the Play —

His

His Uneaſineſs about *Clarinda* at his firſt Appearance—his Violence of Paſſion to his Wife upon the Occaſion — her Fright and Concern — his Reflection that he has gone too far — the calling her back, and telling her, that he does not ſuſpect her Innocence — his owning he was too haſty, deſiring her to open the Affair to *Clarinda* in her own Way — and his Diſtraction and Flutter through the Scene, are fine Touches indeed! And tho' they have not the great Applauſe that other Scenes meet with, yet they yield to none in real Merit: His Suſpicion increaſes every Act, from the Circumſtances of the Plot, until it becomes a confirm'd Jealouſy, and he reſolves to part with his Wife. As you have the Play to peruſe, I ſhan't trouble you with many Quotations; one Expreſſion I muſt mention, which though ſimple, is in my Opinion as fine a Stroke as any in the whole Comedy; *Jack Maggot* and *Bellamy* are perſuading *Strictland*, that all his Suſpicions are groundleſs, and particularly, that the Letter which he imagin'd was written to his Wife, was ſent by *Frankly* to *Clarinda*; and to prove it, they propoſe producing *Frankly* to own himſelf the Author of it, and to bring *Clarinda* to encourage his Addreſſes; upon which he anſwers—*No! let that appear, and I ſhall*—I THINK *I ſhall be ſatisfy'd*;

What

What can be more characteriſtick or natural than this? Theſe are the Touches that in my Opinion ſhew the Maſter more than whole Pages of Repartees, Similies, or Sentiments!---Now for an Objection or two---*Strictland*'s Jealouſy (tho' finely wrote) comes upon us too abruptly; for notwithſtanding his ſtrong ſatirical Remarks upon Female Friendſhips, there does not appear a ſufficient Cauſe for that Violence of Temper, he ſhews at his firſt Entrance: Mrs. *Strictland* has ſaid indeed to *Jacyntha*, that *he grows more and more ill-natur'd*, but does not give the leaſt Hint of his real Diſpoſition; ſo that his Paſſion about *Clarinda* in his firſt Scene, ſeems more the Effect of Avarice and Brutality, than Suſpicion of his Wife; and conſequently, the Beauties of it (which I have taken Notice of before) are loſt for want of a proper Introduction or Explanation. I don't doubt but there are many who look upon this ſudden breaking out and doubtful Behaviour of the Huſband in a contrary Light; however, you deſire my Sentiments on the Matter, ſo right or wrong, you muſt take me *with all my Imperfections on my Head.* *Jack Maggot* comes next under Conſideration. Tnis I call only the Sketch of a Character; tho' I can't ſee how he could be made of more Conſequence than he is; yet I am

ſorry

ſorry he was not reſerv'd for another Play, where he might have had more to do, than merely inviting his Friends to Dinner, and receiving diſtreſs'd Damſels: I am ſure the Author might have ſhew'd this *Virtu-Monger* to greater Advantage; and I am ſorry ſo rich an Object for Ridicule and Pleaſantry has been thrown away, when a Perſon of much leſs Importance might have had his *Poſt-Chaiſe* and *Macaroni*, kept a good Houſe and a *Monkey*, and have been as *honeſt a Fellow as any in Life.*—*Clarinda* is not properly ſpeaking a new Character, becauſe ſhe has ſomething in common with other Coquets; and yet in her, there is a peculiar Eaſe and Gaiety that diſtinguiſh her from the reſt, and give her the Air of an Original.—The two Gentlemen, *Frankly* and *Bellamy*, tho' different from each other, have not the ſtrong Characteriſtic in 'em as *Ranger* has; however, *Frankly* is kept up with great Spirit, and is in my Opinion a very good ſecond Character. The Diſtreſs of theſe two Friends in the Third and Fourth Acts are more artfully contriv'd and intereſting, and their Adventures with *Jacyntha* and *Ranger* are more romantick (with the greateſt Probability) than any *Spaniſh* Novel I ever read. The Ladies in the Boxes (I hear) have objected to the Tameneſs (as they call it) of Mrs. *Strictland*; but

but as the Author, in this Lady has ſhew'd us more, what (he ridiculouſly imagines) Wives *ought* to be, than what they *are*, and has made ſo good a Uſe of her unfaſhionable Behaviour; We will excuſe him, if in his next Play he will give us the Contraſt to her, poſſeſs'd of the true Spirit of Virtue and the Power of Eloquence, which yield to no Perſuaſion and only gain Strength by Oppoſition. The leſſer Perſonages of the Play (tho' worthy Notice) I ſhall paſs by, and finiſh theſe inconnected Obſervations with a few Remarks upon the Whole.— It has been our Author's higheſt Praiſe, that he has not dropt his Characters to endeavour at impertinent Repartees, or improper Sentiments; and yet I think he is guilty of it in one Scene, which I could wiſh was otherwiſe: Act II. Scene IV.

Jack Mag. *I'll be as ſilent as the Grave,*
Frankly---*with a Tomb-ſtone upon it, to tell*
Every one whoſe Duſt you carry.

This I make bold to pronounce falſe Wit, and not of a Piece with our Author's uſual manner of Writing; the next Speeches are better and leſs exceptionable, and yet there is an Affectation in them too I can't away with.

Jack

Jack Mag.—*I'll be as ſecret as a debauch'd Prude,*

Frankly. *Whoſe Sanctity every Body ſuſpects*——

Theſe are the only Inſtances of Trap-Wit in the whole Play, and are ſo unlike the reſt, they ſeem to be of another Species, and ought to be weeded out, as Strangers and Intruders upon that Soil. You'll be ſurpriz'd when I tell you, that there is neither *Rogue*, *Whore*, *Bawd*, *Cuckold*, *intriguing Footman*, or *double Entendre* in this new Comedy; and yet in the three laſt Acts the Audience are ſcarcely allow'd the leaſt Interval from Laughing! This is an Art either very little known, or greatly diſregarded by former dramatick Poets; and I little expected to ſee any Knight-Errant in my Time, who ſhould be hardy enough to attack that Monſter Prejudice, and attempt to reſcue the Stage from Immorality, Profaneneſs and Obſcenity. — *Demoſthenes* was aſk'd what was the firſt Excellence of an Orator; *Action*---What was the ſecond, *Action*, and ſo on; I think theſe Anſwers may be equally, if not better applied to the Excellence of dramatick Poetry; and I ſhall produce the *Suſpicious Husband* and ſome Plays of *Ben Johnſon*, as the ſtrongeſt

Proofs of my Obſervation.---The Comedy in Queſtion, has much leſs Wit than thoſe of *Congreve*, or *Vanbrugh*, and leſs Variety and Strength of Character, than thoſe of *Johnſon*; but it equals any of 'em in *Nature*, ſurpaſſes the two firſt in the Conduct of the *Plot*, and has more Eaſe and as much Spirit as the laſt; in ſhort, our Author has made Wit only a ſecond Conſideration: He never ſtops the Action, to ſay fine Things; His Wit and Humour ariſe from the Circumſtances of the Perſons of the Drama, and his Dialogue is written with ſuch unaffected Eaſe, and natural Vivacity,

——— ——— *Ut ſibi quivis*
Speret idem, ſudet multum, fruſtraque laboret
Auſus idem ———

Give me leave to congratulate you, my dear Friend, upon this new Acquiſition to the Stage; for I think it a very comfortable Conſideration for every Lover of the Drama, that we have now Hopes of ſeeing Comedy revive again, which has been ſo long given o'er, and even thought dead among us.—It would really be very ungrateful in Dr. *Hoadly*, not to continue his Endeavours to entertain the Publick, who have ſo juſtly

and

and univerſally acknowledged his Merit.—The Town, Sir, have been ſo unanimous in their Opinion of the *Suſpicious Husband*, that very few Inſtances can be produc'd of ſuch a ſincere and general Approbation: This the great *Longinus* ſays, is the true Teſt of Merit; and I cannot better conclude my Remarks, than by quoting the Paſſage, which I ſhall take from *Smith*'s excellent Tranſlation of that Author. *When Perſons of different Humours, Ages, Profeſſions, and Inclinations, agree in the ſame joint Approbation of any Performance, then this Union of Aſſent, this Combination of ſo many different Judgments, ſtamps a high and indiſputable Value on that Performance which meets with ſuch general Applauſe.*—Sect. 7th. pag. 15th.

Thus, *George*, I have given you my free and impartial Opinion of Dr. *Hoadly*'s Comedy; and as I have often promis'd you to communicate my Thoughts upon dramatick Poetry in general, I think I can have no better Opportunity than the preſent, as that Subject will be a proper Appendix to the foregoing Obſervations.—I ſhall appear very particular in ſome of my Notions, but if that Particularity will rouſe abler Pens to ſet me and the Publick right upon this Head, I ſhan't repent my Undertaking;

provided a Difference of Opinions, does not beget a modern Controverſy, but that Truth may be the Prize in Queſtion, and our Weapons of Argument not envenom'd with Scurrility or Abuſe.

Notwithſtanding the many various and oppoſite Opinions that Men have, concerning Works of Genius in general; yet 'tis unanimouſly agreed among thoſe of real Taſte, that SHAKESPEAR was the greateſt Dramatick Poet that ever was in this, or any other Nation: He is Excellent (I won't ſay equally) both in the *Sock* and the *Buſkin*. His Comedy is at leaſt equal, if not ſuperior to any; but his Genius in Tragedy, compar'd with that of others, is a Giant among Pigmies: His Powers there are more than Human; and tho' we have many good Poets, yet ſo great is the Diſtance, that it is almoſt abſurd to ſay who is the Second to him.

He is himſelf alone!

This amazing Superiority in *Shakeſpear*, evidently lies in his great Knowledge and Uſe of the *Paſſions*. While other miſtaken Authors are hunting after *Similies*, *Deſcriptions*, and *poetical Images*, he is ever in purſuit of *Nature* only: *They* ranſack their *Heads*,

Heads, but *he* conſults his *Heart*, and while *they* are tickling the Ears, *he* is *harrowing up the Soul!*

We have ſeveral good *Poets*, but very few *Playwrights*; this Diſtinction is obvious; and we have many Tragedies which are fine Poems, yet very indifferent Plays. But to return to *Shakeſpear*. Tho' no Poet has ſuch exalted Sentiments, ſuch animated Deſcriptions, ſuch ſtrong Images, nervous Language, or ſuch dramatick Numbers; yet thoſe are (in my Mind) to be admir'd only as the *Ornaments* of his Genius: But when you ſee him conducting a *Macbeth* from Ambition through Guilt, Horror, Remorſe, and Deſpair! When you behold the Rage, Anguiſh, Madneſs, and miſerable Death of his *Lear!* When you ſee the artful Villany of *Jago* impoſing upon the honeſt Credulity of his General, the gradual Approaches of Jealouſy upon *Othello*'s Mind, with its dreadful Effects! You are loſt in Admiration, and are too ſenſible of the Author's Powers! Nor is it poſſible for the greateſt *Miſanthrope* to have a contemptible Opinion of human Nature, when he conſiders theſe Plays as the Production of a Man! I think I don't carry my Idolatry, Enthuſiaſm, or what you pleaſe to call it, too far; when I aver to you, I had rather

ther be Author of one of thoſe three Tragedies, than of all the reſt (his own excepted) which I have ever ſeen or read, in this or any other Language. It has been often objected to this divine Author, by the low taſtleſs Cavillers, that he wrote without the *Rules*; and I have been always ſurpris'd that the Admirers of him, have given up this Point ſo eaſily, and by their Silence ſuffered ſo unjuſt and paltry a Criticiſm to prevail. If they mean by the *Rules*, the mechanical Ones, of *Place*, *Time*, and *Action* (which are the chief Merit of ſome of our Tragedies) and which he likewiſe has preſerv'd in ſome of his Plays: If I ſay they mean theſe, I own to you he has leapt their Boundaries, and boldly ſet his Imagination at Liberty! He has permitted her to ſoar, not only beyond the Critick's Limits, but ev'n thoſe of Earth and Heav'n, and to take her Flights into new Worlds of his own Creation! How exactly has he painted himſelf in his Midſummer Nights Dream!

The Poet's Eye with a fine Frenzy rowling,
Doth glance from Heav'n to Earth, from
Earth to Heav'n!
And as Imagination bodies forth
The Form of Things unknown; the Poet's
Pen

Turns 'em to Shape, and gives to Airy Nothing,
A local Habitation and a Name!

The more eſſential and noble Rules of the Drama, are always regarded by *Shakeſpear*, the Preſervation and Conſiſtency of Character, the working up of the Paſſions, their Riſe, Progreſs, and Effects! The Variety of intereſting Circumſtances, the unexpected Changes in the Conduct of his Fable, the Blood-thrilling and Heart-breaking Strokes of Nature throughout the Whole, the Sublimity of his Thoughts and Vaſtneſs of his Invention, have never yet been equal'd, and can never be ſurpaſs'd! Therefore, to every Dabler in Poetry, and Pidler in Criticiſm, who (like other Coxcombs) glory in their Ignorance and Infidelity, and who not being able to taſte *Shakeſpear*'s Beauties, are for ever talking at Second-hand of his Errors and Inequalities, I ſhall addreſs the Words of the greateſt and beſt Critick among the Ancients.

In the SUBLIME, *as in great Affluence of Fortune, ſome minuter Articles will unavoidably eſcape Obſervation; but it is almoſt impoſſible for a low and groveling Genius to be guilty of Error, ſince he never endangers himſelf by ſoaring on high, or aiming at Eminence,*

Eminence, but ſtill goes on in the ſame uniform ſecure Track; whilſt its very Height and Grandeur, expoſes the Sublime to ſudden Falls!

Smith's Tranſlation of Longinus. Sect. 33. pag. 79.

Theſe, Sir, are my looſe Thoughts upon this great Maſter of the Drama. I have not endeavour'd at a methodical Diſſertation, nor have I given you a Third of what I had to ſay. The Theme is inexhauſtible, and I find myſelf ſtill ſo full of him, that you muſt give me leave to make a ſhort epiſtolary Digreſſion concerning him, to Mr. C——*k* the Player.

SIR,

'AS well as I like you, I have ſome 'Faults to find with you; I have 'once or twice (tho' unknown) commu- 'nicated my Thoughts to you before, I 'won't ſay with what Succeſs: I ſhall 'addreſs you in a candid friendly manner, 'ſo have no Apprehenſion of your being 'offended; if you are, you have more 'Vanity than you ought to have, and leſs 'Senſe than I thought you had. If you 'take me for the Author of a late *Treatiſe 'upon the Paſſions*, in which you are cri- 'ticiz'd in the Character of *Lear*, you do

'me

' me wrong; and to convince you that I
' am not only impartial, but a friendly Ad-
' viſer, I will firſt clear you from his Miſ-
' repreſentations, before I take you in Hand
' myſelf. The Author of this Treatiſe de-
' clares himſelf a *young Writer*; and were
' we not more convinc'd of it, from the
' Matter of his Performance, than his Mo-
' deſty in treating it, his Veracity might be
' call'd in Queſtion: What may we not
' hope from ſo intrepid a Genius! who at
' firſt ſetting out, takes upon himſelf the
' Cenſorſhip of the Stage, and becomes at
' once Preceptor-general to the Publick
' and the Actors! However, with all proper
' Deference to his Judgment, and a due
' Contempt of his Diſpleaſure, I ſhall ven-
' ture to ſay, he has groſsly miſtook the
' Character of *Lear*, and either has not
' given himſelf the trouble to read the
' Original, or (what is more unpardonable)
' has only quoted a few inconſiderable Paſ-
' ſages, to ſerve his own Ends, and miſlead
' the Ignorant. He opens his Criticiſm of
' *Lear*, with *a ſhort Account of the Paſ-
' ſions*, which indeed is unanſwerable; and
' if he had purſu'd this manner of Writing
' through the whole, he had been ſecure;
' but by unfortunately having ſome Mean-
' ing in other Parts, he imprudently diſ-
' covers his weak Side, and lies open to

'the Attacks of every thinking Man in the 'Kingdom. In order to give us a Sketch 'of *Lear*'s moral Character, *a Circumſtance* '(which he ſays) *never ought to eſcape the* '*View of an Actor*, he quotes a Paſſage 'that is not in SHAKESPEAR.

Ungrateful as they were,
Tho' the Wrongs they have heaped on me
are numberleſs,
I feel a Pang of Nature for 'em yet.

'Is it not ſurprizing that this great Critick 'and Man of Taſte, ſhould propoſe Lines 'for your Conſideration, which are in the 'vile Alterations by *Tate?* and which only 'mark that Tenderneſs and Affection, 'which in other Parts of his Pamphlet 'he condemns in you, as no Ingredients 'of the Character? When *Kent* in the '*Original* addreſſes himſelf thus to *Lear*,

Your eldeſt Daughters have foredone them-
ſelves,
And deſperately are dead!

The poor old King, quite ſenſeleſs, and near his Death, only anſwers

Ay, ſo I think.

'Thus

'Thus the *Cenſor* has not only injur'd '*Shakeſpear*, by taking this *Sketch* from 'the unhallow'd Pencil of *Tate*, but he 'has even injur'd poor *Tate* himſelf; for 'his Lines are thus,

Ungrateful as they were, my Heart feels yet
A Pang of Nature for their wretched Fall!

'Where are our Critick's Ears, that he 'could not find out that *his* ſecond Line '(for it belongs to No-body elſe) is three 'Syllables too long, and is neither Proſe or 'Poetry? He condemns you greatly for 'your Manner of uttering the Curſe againſt '*Goneril*; but had he look'd into *Shake-*'*ſpear*, he would not have been ſo ſevere 'upon *your Tears ſhed at the Concluſion*, or 'have ſaid, that the *ſtrange Mixture of* '*Grief and Paſſion was highly unnatural*; 'for this Speech immediately following the 'Curſe, is your Direction and Authority.

Lear. *I'll tell thee—Life and Death, I am aſham'd*
That thou haſt Pow'r to ſhake my Manhood thus!
That theſe hot Tears which break from me perforce

Should make thee worth them--- Blaſts and
Fogs upon thee,
Th' untented Woundings of a Father's
Curſe
Pierce every Senſe about thee! Old fond
Eyes
Beweep her once again, I'll pluck ye out
And caſt you with the Waters that you
loſe
To temper Clay——

'Has not the Author here moſt ſtrongly 'pointed out the Mixture of Grief and 'Paſſion? But ſuppoſing he had not, who 'can be ſo unfeeling, or ſo little acquainted 'with human Nature, not to know that 'theſe Tranſitions from Rage to Grief were 'neceſſary to ſupport the Character? *Lear* 'is old and choleric, and of Conſequence, 'when his Rage is ſpent and his Powers fail 'him, he muſt naturally (from his Cir-'cumſtances) ſink into Sorrow.——In the 'Second Act his Grief almoſt overpowers 'him, and he expreſſes himſelf in theſe 'ſtrong Terms!

Lear. *Oh how this Mother ſwells up tow'rd*
my Heart!
Hyſterica Paſſio, *down, thou climbing Sor-*
row:
Thy Element's below.

You

You ſee me here, you Gods, a poor old Man,
As full of Griefs as Age, &c.
Oh let not Womens Weapons, Water-drops,
Stain my Man's Cheeks — No, you unnatural Hags!
I will have ſuch Revenges on you both, &c.——

'Here he finds his Tears making their 'Way; and when they burſt out, his 'Pride endeavours to conceal 'em, by ſay-'ing, that he won't weep.

You think I'll weep, &c.
No, I'll not weep.

'What can be more natural or affecting? 'In theſe laſt Words there is no Tranſition 'from one Paſſion to the other, but they 'are abſolutely blended together; and I 'muſt take Notice, that in this very Place 'your Manner, and Execution, equals any 'Thing you do in the whole Character. 'In Act the Third.

Lear. ——*But I'll puniſh home;*
No, I will weep no more——

'In theſe mix'd Paſſions *(ſo highly unna-'tural to our young Writer and Inſtructor)* 'the ſuperior Abilities of *Shakeſpear* ap-'pear.

'pear. No Poet has 'em in any degree of
'Competition with him, and therefore no
'Poet ſo excellent. In the Fourth Act of
'*Othello*, there is a ſtronger Inſtance of a
'Mixture of the ſame Paſſions.

Othello. *I would have him nine Years a killing!*
A fine Woman, a fair Woman, a ſweet Woman!

Iago. *Nay, you muſt forget that.*

Othello. *Ay, let her rot and periſh, and be damn'd to Night; For ſhe ſhall not live; no, my Heart is turn'd to Stone: I ſtrike it and it hurts my Hand— Oh the World hath not a ſweeter Creature; ſhe might lie by an Emperor's Side and command him Taſks!*

'I would fain aſk the Critick, whether
'this *unmanly Sniveling* (as he delicately
'terms it) theſe ſudden Tranſitions from
'Rage to Tenderneſs, *lowers the Conſe-*
'*quence of* Othello? And if a robuſt War-
'riour, *drops Tears as faſt as the Arabian*
'*Trees their medicinal Gums*, can it be
'*highly unnatural* in *Lear*, who is *Four-*
'*ſcore and upwards?* I could produce many
'more Proofs of his weeping, almoſt in
'every Scene he appears; but it is as ridi-
'culous

'culous and impertinent to tire you with
'Quotations upon an undoubted Point, as
'it is to produce none in Defence of a
'ſtrange and uncommon Opinion.

'The Critick ſays, (Mr. *G-rr-ck*) you ſhould
'have no Mark of *Malice*, *Premeditation*,
'or *Solemnity* in uttering the Curſe. Here
'one of us is greatly miſtaken, for I al-
'ways thought a Deſire of Revenge im-
'ply'd *Malice*, and that there could be no
'Addreſs or Prayer to Heaven (whether
'for Bleſſings or Curſes) without ſome
'Mark of *Solemnity!* However, not to
'diſpute upon Words, I ſhall recollect
'your Manner of executing that Part of
'the Play, and then let the Judges pro-
'nounce their Sentence. You fall preci-
'pitately upon your Knees, extend your
'Arms--- clench your Hands--- ſet your
'Teeth---and with a ſavage Diſtraction in
'your Look--trembling in all your Limbs--
'and your Eyes pointed to Heaven, (the
'whole expreſſing a fulneſs of Rage and
'Revenge) you begin

Hear Nature, Dear Goddeſs!——

'with a *broken*, *inward*, *eager* Utterance;
'from thence riſing every Line in Loudneſs
'and Rapidity of Voice, 'till you come to

——*and*

——— *and feel*
How ſharper than a Serpent's Tooth it is,
To have a thankleſs Child.

'Then you are ſtruck at once with your 'Daughter's Ingratitude; and burſting into 'Tears, with a moſt ſorrowful Heart-'breaking Tone of Voice, you ſay

——*go, go, my People.*

'This in my Opinion is the ſtrongeſt 'Climax of Rage; and the Break from it 'at the End of the Speech, gives a natural, 'neceſſary Variety, and was viſibly de-'ſign'd ſo by the Author, as I have prov'd 'before. But now (as *Bayes* ſays) *for as 'far-fetch'd a Fancy as ever you heard*; the 'Critick undertakes to demonſtrate, *that 'the Deſire of Royalty is the Point diſtracts* 'Lear's *Judgment*; *and that* Shakeſpear '*has not put one Expreſſion into his Mouth 'throughout the Madneſs, but what bears a 'viſible Relation to this firſt Cauſe!* Now it 'unfortunately happens, that there is not 'a ſingle Word mention'd (except once) in 'the firſt and ſecond Scene of his Mad-'neſs, that has the leaſt Relation to Roy-'alty: It is evidently the Uſage of his 'Daughters that continually rankles in his

'Mind;

‘ Mind; and in the ſecond Scene he fan-
‘ cies himſelf in a Court of Juſtice, and
‘ arraigns 'em for their Ingratitude:

——I will arraign 'em ſtrait.
——Now ye She Foxes!
——Arraign her firſt; 'tis Goneril!
And here's another whoſe warpt Looks proclaim
What Store her Heart is made of---Stop her there!
Let 'em anatomize Regan*---ſee what breeds about her Heart. Is there any Cauſe in Nature for theſe hard Hearts?*

‘ What can ſtronger mark the Cauſe of
‘ his Diſorder! I cannot help taking No-
‘ tice, how exquiſitely and figuratively he
‘ deſcribes the State of his Wretchedneſs in
‘ the following Lines of the Fourth Act!

——————But I am bound
Upon a Wheel of Fire, which my own Tears
Do ſcald like molten Lead!
‘ What a Picture of Diſtraction and Sorrow!

‘ Tho' the Ingratitude of *Regan* and *Go-*
‘ *neril*, and not the Deſire of Royalty, is
‘ inconteſtably the Cauſe of *Lear*'s Mad-
‘ neſs; yet it does not follow, that you or

'any Actor ſhould drop the Majeſty of the 'Character, to *pick Straws, play with 'em, or uſe boyiſh Actions:* Theſe are the 'Critick's Allegations: But as his Credit has 'appear'd hitherto a little exceptionable, I 'will examine your Behaviour in that 'Scene, and then have done with him. 'In order to come at the Truth, let us 'know how you came by your Straw, and 'your fantaſtick Garlands?

Cord. *Alack 'tis he—Why he was met ev'n now*
As mad as the vext Sea, ſinging aloud,
Crown'd with rank Fumitory and Furrow Weeds,
With Burdocks, Hemlock, Nettles, Cuckow Flowers,
Darnel, and all the idle Weeds that grow
In our ſuſtaining Corn.

'I ſhould be glad to know what Part of 'the *Royal Prerogative* is particularly ſhewn 'in *ſinging aloud*, or *dreſſing in Weeds and 'Flowers?* The Critick will reply, per- 'haps, that he takes the Weeds for his 'Regalia, and therefore makes a Crown 'with them; I agree with him, and there- 'fore he may very naturally fancy a Hand- 'ful of Straw his Scepter; and this is the 'Uſe you make of it: You enter with all

'the

'the Dignity your *insignificant trifling Per-*
'*son* is capable of; you throw yourself into
'many various Attitudes of Command,
'and tho' you have Straw in your Hand,
'yet we very plainly see, that you take it
'for a *Scepter*, *Bow*, *Gauntlet*, *&c.* as the
'different Ideas rise in your Imagination.

'But 'tis in vain to argue with one, who
'has so much misrepresented the *Actor*, and
'so little regarded his *Author*.—His propo-
'sing *Tate*'s Lines (which he has misquoted)
'for the Foundation of the Character, and
'his asserting that the *Curse* is at the End of
'the First Act (which in *Shakespear*, is nei-
'ther at the End of the Act or the Scene)
'plainly prove, that he wholly relied upon
'his own Head, and had recourse neither to
'the *Original* or *Alteration*; so great is the
'Impartiality, Judgment, and Modesty, of
'our *young Writer*. Thus, Mr. *G--rr--ck*, I
'have endeavour'd to vindicate you, where
'I thought you justifiable; and shall now
'as freely censure, where I think you erro-
'neous. In the first Place, why will you
'do so great an Injury to *Shakespear*, as to
'perform *Tate*'s execrable Alteration of
'him? Read and consider the two Plays
'seriously, and then make the Publick and
'the Memory of the Author some Amends,
'by giving us *Lear* in the *Original*, *Fool* and
'all; (*Macklin* or *Chapman* will play it

' well ;) and as ſome ſmall Recompence for
' your Converſion to the Ways of Truth,
' I will convince you of ſome Errors you are
' guilty of in that capital Character.

' When you appear in the Fourth Act
' with the Phyſician, *Kent*, and *Cordelia*,
' you ſhould change your Dreſs :

Cord. *Is he array'd?*
Phy. *Ay, Madam, in the Heavineſs of Sleep*
We put freſh Garments on him.

' But ſuppoſing you had not this Direction,
' how could you ſpeak the following Lines,
' without diſcovering the Abſurdity?

Lear. *I'm mainly ign'rant*
What Place this is, and all the Skill I have,
Remembers not theſe Garments.

' Here he has a ſhort Interval from Mad-
' neſs ; and the Loſs of his Reaſon before,
' is a very poor Excuſe for his not knowing
' now he's in his Senſes the Garments he
' has wore for almoſt Four Acts : But this
' and many other Miſtakes are owing to
' your Acquaintance with that ſorry Fellow
' *Tate*. If you had look'd into Sir *Thomas*
' *Hanmer*'s Edition of *Shakeſpear*, you
' never

'never ſurely could ſpeak the following 'Speech in the Manner you do.

Dear Daughter, I confeſs that I am old,
Age is unneceſſary: On my Knees I beg,
That you'll vouchſafe to give me Raiment,
Bed, and Food.

'This you ſpeak as really imploring *Re-* 'gan, (which is very unnatural;) whereas 'tis ſtrong *Irony*, in anſwer to her, when 'ſhe adviſes him to *return to her Siſter, and* 'aſk her Forgiveneſs. *How*, (ſays *Lear*) 'aſk her Forgiveneſs? *Does this become* 'Us? Would you have me fall upon my 'Knees, and ſay,

Dear Daughter, I confeſs that I am old, &c.

'In this Senſe the Speech is ſtrong in Na- 'ture; in your and Mr. *Tate*'s, 'tis Spirit- 'leſs and out of Character: I agree with 'the Author of the *Treatiſe upon the Paſ-* 'ſions in one part of an Obſervation, tho' 'utterly againſt him in the other. When 'you burſt into Tears at the End of the 'Curſe, you need not make uſe of your 'Handkerchief; your Change of Voice ſuf- 'ficiently marks your Diſtreſs, and your 'Application to your Handkerchief is, per- 'haps, too minute a Circumſtance, and 'makes you more preſent to Things, than

'you

'you ought to be at that Time. I could 'wish you would curb your Spirit a little in 'a long Speech in the Second Act that 'begins,

Inform'd 'em! do'ſt thou underſtand me Man?
The King would ſpeak with Cornwall, *&c.*

'The Violence of his Temper breaks out 'ſeveral times, and it is my Opinion that 'your full Power of Voice ſhould be re-'ſerv'd for,

——*Bid 'em come forth and hear me,*
Or, at the Chamber Door, I'll beat the Drum,
Till it cry, ſleep to Death!

'*Sleep to Death!* Ought to be your moſt 'forcible and dreadful Point of Rage.

'In your firſt Scene of the Fifth Act, 'there is ſomething done and ſaid by you, 'that always diſpleas'd me: When *Kent* 'diſcovers to you that he was *Caius*, you 'ſay (in the Nonſenſe of the Altera-'tion)

Caius! *Wer't thou my truſty* Caius?
Enough——*Enough.*

'and

'and then you faint away, becauſe *Cor-*
'*delia*, takes notice of the *Blood leaving*
'*your Cheeks*, and calls for help---This *Se-*
'*cond* Fit has no Effect, and you might as
'well cut a Caper. You will ſay the alter'd
'Play has mark'd it ſo; to which I anſwer,
'that it can be no Mitigation of your
'Fault, to plead that Mr. *Nahum Tate*
'has ſeduc'd you; tho' you are not the
'Principal, you are acceſſary to the Mur-
'der, and will be brought in Guilty—How
'can you keep your Countenance when
'you come to the *Spheres ſtopping their*
'*Courſe*, *the Sun making halt*, and *the*
'*Winds bearing on their roſy Wings*, that
'Cordelia *is a Queen!* Surely you are not
'acquainted with your own Powers (for
'let the Cenſor ſay what he will) the laſt
'Scene of *Shakeſpear*'s *Lear* muſt ſhew you
'to advantage; and I hope it is rather your
'Idleneſs, than Judgment, that makes you
'perſiſt in the other — Here I ſhall leave
'you, not I aſſure you for want of Sub-
'ject-Matter, (for I have more Remarks
'in Store) but for want of Room and
'Time,' and ſo

SIR,

Your humble Servant.

Now

Now (*George*) I ſhall return to you, and the Dramatick Poets; I'll endeavour to be as conciſe as poſſible, and ſo without more Ceremony I ſhall proceed to *Ben Johnſon*.

Ben was *Shakeſpear*'s Contemporary and Rival. He has ſucceeded in Comedy, but greatly fail'd in the Buſkin. His Tragedies are nothing but Hiſtorical Facts digeſted in Five Acts, and fill'd up with long Speeches, tranſlated almoſt literally from the ancient Hiſtorians and Poets, and put into Blank Verſe.

Beaumont and *Fletcher*, who liv'd at the ſame Time; have certainly great Merit, and though they have not one finiſh'd Play in all their Number, yet they are far Superior to *Ben* in their Tragedies, and thoſe ſerious Scenes which are interwove in their Comedies: Their Fables are generally intereſting for the firſt Three Acts, but afterwards they fall into ſuch low Extravagancies, and monſtrous Improbabilities, 'tis ſcarcely poſſible to read 'em through. They have endeavour'd to ridicule *Shakeſpear* in many of their Plays, and yet are ſuch ſervile Imitators of him, that they have been *modeſt* enough not only to borrow Sentiments and Speeches from him, but even Plots and Characters! Their chief Merit lies in Comedy,

medy, and in that I ſhall acknowledge our Obligations to 'em hereafter: All the Editions of their Works are very erroneous; but I hear with Pleaſure, there is a new One in the Preſs, by a very ingenious and able Hand.

I ſhall paſs over an Examination of the Tribe of *Minor Poets* from before *Ben Johnſon*'s Time to *Dryden*; it will be no great Loſs, when you conſider that the *beſt* of their Performances are collected together, and publiſh'd by *Dodſley*, in twelve Volumes.

Dryden, tho' a very great *Poet*, is (in my Opinion) a very faulty *Playwright*. There are moſt delightful fine Paſſages, and ſome good Scenes in all his Tragedies; but conſider 'em as Plays, and they ſink greatly in their Value. *All for Love* is eſteemed his Maſter-piece, and has been generally look'd upon as a perfect Performance; I have ſeen it more than once repreſented to the greateſt Advantage by *Booth*, *Oldfield*, *&c.* And tho' my Ears have been delighted with the Poetry, and my Mind charm'd with the Sentiments, yet my Eyes have been dry, and my Heart quiet. Read *Antony and Cleopatra*, from which the other is taken, tho' one of the moſt incorrect and

careleſs of *Shakeſpear*'s Plays, and you will ſoon *feel* the Difference. *Dryden*'s Play is moſt correctly poetical with the Unities; *Shakeſpear*'s is moſt pathetically Natural without 'em. The firſt is the finiſh'd Performance of a great Poet, the laſt the haſty Production of a true Dramatick Genius. The ſtrongeſt Proofs that *Dryden* had not the right Notion of the Drama, or at leaſt could not execute it, are his Tragedies in Rhyme; and yet I muſt own, if you read his Arguments in Defence of the Practice, tho' you arm your Reaſon ever ſo much againſt him, his Powers of Writing are ſo Extraordinary, that there is Danger of his inſinuating his Poiſon into your Judgment, and making you a Convert to his ridiculous Doctrines.

Nat. Lee, is by ſome, call'd a Genius, and by all, a Madman: There is ſo much more of the One than the Other in his Writings, that I cou'd never read him with Pleaſure. 'Tis true, he has ſome Intervals, but they are very ſhort, and not frequent: His Plays are (in my Mind) the ſtrongeſt Burleſque of Tragedy; and there is nothing in *Tom Thumb*, I think more extravagantly ridiculous, than many Paſſages in his *Alexander*, *Cæſar Borgia*, *Maſſacre of Paris*, and *Theodoſius*: I ſhou'd not have mention'd him,

him, had not Mr. *Dryden* thought ſo well of him as to aſſiſt him in two Plays; and indeed, he has catch'd ſo much of *Lee*'s Diſorder by converſing with him, that it is difficult in the Tragedies they are concerned together, to ſeparate One from the Other.

Otway is call'd *Shakeſpear*'s eldeſt Son! And is certainly a Genius; and tho' any body might be proud of ſuch an Heir, yet, if my Information is right, they are not ſo nearly related. He wants Variety, and can touch none of the Paſſions maſterly, but Love. There is exquiſite Tenderneſs and fine Diſtreſs in his *Jaffier* and *Belvidera*, and in *Caſtalio* and *Monimia*; the Rage of *Chamont* is often unnatural, but his Affection for his Siſter is finely touch'd throughout. There is great Gallantry, Spirit, and Nature, in *Polydore*, and a ſtrong characteriſtick Boldneſs in *Pierre*; his Poetry, tho' often low and creeping, yet is frequently ſweet and harmonious, and ſometimes nervous and elevated: But with this confin'd Merit, what Claim can he lay to the unbounded Poſſeſſions of the Other? No, no; *Shakeſpear* left no Inheritor behind him, the Publick are his only Heirs, who now enjoy, and will enrich themſelves with his Treaſures for ever.

Southern has more dramatick Merit than *Rowe*, but is not altogether ſo good a Poet; all the tragick Part of *Oroonoko* equals any thing but *Shakeſpear*; and his Diſtreſs in the *Innocent Adultery* is moving and terrible: *Southern* writes chiefly to the Heart, but he has not the Powers of touching the higher Paſſions. He has always been celebrated for his *Purity*, whether they mean the Purity of his Language or Thoughts I can't tell; but in my Opinion he is very graceleſs in all his Comedies, and has great Inaccuracies of Language throughout his Works.

Rowe is a good Poet, and remarkable for the Harmony of his Verſe; however, that continual uninterrupted Flow is too lulling and enervate for Tragedy: The purling Stream ſuits well with Paſtoral, and the gentler Kinds of Poetry; but when the Paſſions are to be mov'd the *Waters ſhould be troubled!* *Rowe*'s Poetry is often happily ſuited to the Endearments of Love; but when Rage, Sorrow, Anger, Horror, or Revenge, are to be expreſs'd, the Verſification ſhould change with the Paſſions: For when the Mind is in a Tempeſt, the Utterance ſhould never be calm'd by the Melody of Numbers; this Singing upon

the Rack (in my Opinion) is a great Objection to Mr. *Rowe* as a Play-Writer: What could he poſſibly mean by calling his *Jane Shore* an Imitation of *Shakeſpear*? There is not the moſt faint Sketch of him either in Deſign, Drawing or Colouring! However, let me acknowledge that there is Nature, Character, and fine Writing in his *Fair Penitent*; and, had *Shakeſpear* never been, he certainly had been placed in the firſt Claſs of dramatick Poets.

Mr. *Addiſon* is a great *Poet*, and his *Cato* is a noble *Poem*——*but further this Deponent ſayeth not.*——I can't well account for the conſtant Honours the Stage confer upon his Tragedy, and the great Diſregard it has ſhewn to his Comedy! The *Drummer* is certainly a high finiſh'd Picture of the Life it repreſents, and has Character, Purity, and true Humour to recommend it. Every Body will judge for himſelf, but for my own part (with all due Deference to the Buſkin) I had rather laugh at the ridiculous Reflections of his Steward *Vellum*, than be made wiſer by the exalted Sentiments of his *Cato*.

Phædra and *Hippolitus* is another remarkable Inſtance, that a Tragedy may be a fine Poem, and yet fail in the Repreſentation;

tation: Tho' this Play has been long neglected, yet (in my Opinion) it has as much *Poetical*, and rather more *Theatrical* Merit than *Cato*; the Scenes are better plann'd and the Fable is more intereſting. The Author Mr. *Smith*, was a great Scholar, a good Critick, and a true *Poetical*, I wiſh I could ſay alſo *dramatick* Genius.

Theſe, and theſe only, are juſtly deem'd the *Worthies* of the Stage; nor do I recollect another Son of the Muſes, who has any Right to a Place among 'em; and yet there is an Author, tho' in no Rank or Compariſon with the foregoing, that has ſomething about him ſo truly tragical, with all his Incorrectneſs of Language, Lowneſs of Expreſſion, Extravagance of Thought, and almoſt total Ignorance of Poetry, that I ſhall introduce him to you more as a Peice of Curioſity, than an Object of Admiration--- The Perſon I mean is *Lillo*, Author of *George Barnwell*, and the *Fatal Curioſity!* He was a Man of no Education, or Knowledge of the great World; who with a warm Heart and a rude uncultivated Mind, ventur'd at a low Species of Tragedy; and has ſo well ſucceeded in thoſe two Plays, that tho' they are not to be ſpoke of as fine Performances, yet from the bare Circumſtances of the Story, they draw more Tears

from

from an Audience, than all the high finish'd Poetical Scenes of *Cato* or *All for Love!*—— Could our modern Bards (from his Example) be perſuaded to lower their Genius to the Weakneſſes of Mankind, their Works might have a Chance to outlive 'em; for if poor *Lillo* (without the Aſſiſtance of Poetry) can touch the Paſſions, what might we not hope from thoſe, who have all the Requiſites (but *Feeling*) to exhibit a profitable and laſting Performance!

What can be the Reaſon that there is not one living Tragedy of all thoſe which have been produc'd in the laſt twenty Years? Is it the want of Taſte in the Publick, or of *dramatick* Abilities in the Authors?—— Our modern Plays (in imitation of the *French*) are mere declamatory Dialogues in blank Verſe, and are ſtrong, but tranſitory Inſtances, that our Poets have conſulted their preſent Profit more than their Genius or future Reputation. It will be expected, I ſuppoſe, that I ſhould ſay ſomething here of the *Diſtreſs'd Mother*, which has kept a footing upon the Stage ever ſince its firſt Appearance, and is ſo greatly commended by the *Spectator*. This is true, but as my Intent is only to ſpeak of our own Tragedies, I can't look upon the *Andromache* of *Racine*, daſh'd a little in the Fifth

Act

Act with the *Oreſtes* of *Euripides*, to be an *Engliſh* Production: The ſame Author has wrote *Humphry Duke of Gloſter*, and the *Briton*, both original Pieces; but as I can ſay little in Praiſe of *their Memories*, I ſhan't throw my Encomiums away upon a litteral (tho' a very good) Tranſlation.

Thus I have thrown together my looſe Thoughts upon our Tragedy Authors; I ſhall next conſider our Comedy; but as that Subject will take up more Time than I can ſpare at preſent, I ſhall reſerve it for a more correct and regular Eſſay; the Matter is more various, and our Comick Genius's more numerous than our Tragick; I ſhall therefore——but here *break we off*, for the Devil's at the Door and wants more Copy; ſo

DEAR GEORGE,

Yours, &c.

A Piece of ſecret Hiſtory.

READER,

I Am afraid you have run through the foregoing Sheets with too much Impatience and Inattention, and are now coming with open Mouth, and a keen Appetite, to take a Snap at this *Piece of ſecret Hiſtory*.— Tell the Truth. — Are you not in full Expectation of a good Twelve-pennyworth of Satire, Scandal, and Detraction? Nay, have you not bought the Pamphlet for the ſake of this Secret only, and even now are fretting that I won't come to the Point? I hope you have not entirely reſerv'd yourſelf for the *Deſert*; for, as I intend it merely of the Whip-Syllabub kind, and what is vulgarly call'd the *Unſubſtantial*, I am in ſome fear it won't prove the *Bon Bouche* you may imagine it.

Firſt then (gentle Sir) I'll tell you what I have *not* to tell you, and then I'll uncover, and you may fall to. —— *Imprimis*, I

have nothing to ſay againſt the M-n-ſt-y; there has been ſo much ſaid already, and ſo little minded, that the Bite won't take. — Beſides, as MONTAIGNE ſays — *I have Prudence enough to let the* COACHES *paſs, and my good Manners won't let me peep into* WINDOWS. I would not have you imagine from this, that I could not make a Figure in all the Species of Satire; I have a great Knack at Inuendo's, Hints, and Inſinuations. I could tell you—that a *Dutchman* — (at the laſt Maſquerade) — in Conference with a *Petit Maitre* — overheard by a Lady in the *Hungarian* Dreſs— an *Engliſh Sailor* was of the Party—join'd the Gentleman in the *Spaniſh* Habit——an Intrigue was expected — but the *Sailor* reſenting the *Petit Maitre*'s Rudeneſs to the *Lady*, 'tis thought a Duel will enſue, notwithſtanding the great Civilities at firſt Meeting. —— Thus I could go on for ever with as much Humour and Fancy as e'er a political Writer of 'em all; or if I had a mind to exert my Talents in *private* Affairs, and divulge Family Misfortunes, (cou'd I but wave my Humanity) I ſhou'd become a very dangerous Rival to a certain great Genius in that way: But to the Point; The *Piece of ſecret Hiſtory* which I am going to reveal, was communicated to me by my Landlord and Bookſeller. He is not a Man, I aſſure you, of a cenſorious Diſpoſition;

ſition; nor do I believe he would have open'd the following Affair to me, if he had not thought we were both nearly concern'd in the Conſequences.

He comes up one Morning to me before I was out of Bed, and, after begging Pardon for diſturbing me, *Sir*, (ſays he) *I ſhould not have been guilty of this Freedom, had not ſomething run in my Head all Night, which gives me great Uneaſineſs, and requires our immediate Conſultation!* Pray Mr. —— what is the Matter? *I have been conſidering what would be the beſt Method to have your Pamphlet read by the Town.*——Is not printing it the only way? *Oh no*, (reply'd my Landlord ſmiling) *nothing more precarious—Do you know, Sir, that I muſt ſell five hundred before I can clear a Shilling. Now if we could fix upon a good* TAKING IN *Title, the Buſineſs is done; for there have been lately ſo many* TREATISES, OBSERVATIONS, EXAMENS, REMARKS, *&c. upon Plays, Actors, and Acting, that if we have not ſomething particular in our Sign to excite Curioſity, let our Liquor be ever ſo fine, or well taſted, it will grow ſtale upon our Hands for want of Cuſtomers.* Well, Mr. ——, the Piece is your own now, ſo pray give it what Name you pleaſe: But I would not adviſe you to put down *Ven'ſon* or *Turbut* in your Bill of Fare, and then give the Gueſts

nothing but *Beef-ſteaks.* —— *I ſee, Sir, by your bantering me, that you think my Propoſal not only ridiculous, but diſhoneſt.* ——*But conſider, Sir, if I have a good thing to communicate to the Publick, and want only a proper Vehicle to make it go down, is it not a laudable Deluſion to apply a Bait to their Prejudices, in order to improve, or entertain 'em? Upon this Preſumption then, nothing (in my Opinion) would give ſuch a Spirit to the Sale of the Book, as the Words* SECRET HISTORY *in the Title-page.* ——Secret Hiſtory? *Ay, Sir,* —— *Secret Hiſtory implies ſomething unknown, and ſomething cenſorious; the firſt excites Curioſity, and the ſecond gratifies our Ill-nature; and let me ſee the Mortal (ſingular enough) to withſtand that double Temptation. Each Perſon who reads the Advertiſement, will hope to have his own particular Paſſion indulg'd; the* CRITICKS *and* POETS *will think it ſomething againſt the new Comedy, or its Author; one* PARTY *ſwears it muſt be ſome unexpected Stroke at the M-n-ſtry; the* COURTIERS *imagine it new Matter againſt the Ind-p-nd-t El-ct-rs; the* JACOBITES *will buy it up, and expect News from* ——— ; *and if the* LADIES *take it into their Heads to fancy it the Diſcovery of ſome Intrigue or other, there will be as great a Demand for your Pamphlet, as there was for the Trial-Tickets, or the laſt new Farce.*

This is the Net that will enmeſh 'em all!

He

He urged many more Arguments in Defence of this Practice; and seeing I still had some Qualms, he endeavour'd to relieve me from 'em by going on in this manner: —— *Let us suppose that I am guilty of an Imposition —is it not a meritorious one? for, without a Compliment, your Matter is good, Sir. I have been in the Trade these twenty Years, and my Judgment never fail'd me in all that time but twice. I was indeed a considerable Loser by the Reverend Mr.* ——'s *Sermons, and was something out of Pocket by his moral Tracts; but he has since made it up to me in his Conundrums, and I am satisfy'd. —But to return:— Mankind are as perverse, as froward, and as whimsical as Children; and as the latter are induc'd to take what is proper for 'em, by calling it Sugar-plumbs, Biscuits, Ginger-bread, &c. so you may delude the former by applying to their false Tastes, and fashionable Prejudices.* My Doubts here beginning to clear up, he proceeded to deeper Considerations: *Look round the World, Sir, and you'll see this* FRONTI NULLA FIDES *in all Degrees and Stations of Life! What outward Signs of Grace and unshaken Patriotism have we beheld in the once honourable* BRUTUS! *What a Virgin Simplicity, and what frequent Blushes overspread the Face of* PRUDELLA? *What Terror and martial Ardor appear in the long Sword*

Sword and piercing Eyes of VIVAX? *And what a gentle, decent, unoffending Mildneſs governs the whole Behaviour of* MODESTUS? *Yet both Patriot and Prude are fallen, and* MODESTUS *has kick'd* VIVAX *out of Company for his Inſolence. Theſe are four of the many thouſand Examples of what I call (in my way)* TAKING-IN *Frontiſpieces. If you examine human Nature thoroughly, you'll ſcarcely find out one true Title-Page in all your Obſervations. Do you remember the Gentleman in the black Coat and Tye-Wig, who ſat near us the firſt Night of the new Play? How immoderately he laugh'd, and what Delight he expreſs'd at the Repreſentation? He was a Poet himſelf, and to my Knowledge is now publiſhing Abuſes both againſt the Author and the Performance. If you would excuſe me, I could give you a nearer and more convincing Proof of my Aſſertion.* —— Pray let us have 'em; you can't oblige me more. —— *Why, Sir, let any one read the firſt Leaf of* YOU at preſent, *and he would imagine that within, there is great Unconcern about the Succeſs of your Pamphlet, and a total Diſregard of the Opinion of the Publick.* —— *But I appeal to yourſelf, if thoſe Particulars are really the Contents of your Mind?* I bluſh'd at this unexpected Diſcovery, and pleaded Guilty. *I am ſo well aſſur'd* (continu'd my Landlord) *of the great Efficacy of Words, that by the Force*

of

of them only I could propoſe a Scheme would even make RELIGION *faſhionable.——Pray don't laugh at me, Sir.--If the Parſon of every Pariſh (not excepting St.* James's*) would ſend Cards about to the Ladies of his Flock with his Compliments, and deſiring their Company on* Sunday *to his* DRUM: ——*The coarſe Idea of Prayers and Sermon would immediately be melted down to that of an Aſſembly, and Pews would be as much ſought after by Perſons of the firſt Quality, as the Boxes at a favourite Play. And ſo* vice versâ: *If the Legiſlature would make a Law, that the Opera-Houſe ſhould be call'd a Church, the Audience a Congregation, and the* Italian *Airs Pſalm-ſinging, the very Names would deſtroy the Things, and we ſhould have no more Regard for Eunuchs than we have for the Clergy.* This I imagin'd was carrying the Scheme too far; but he has ſince given me ſome Reaſons I could not anſwer; for he told me ſeriouſly (and indeed his Word may be depended upon) *That he had rather five hundred People were taken in for their Shilling by buying the Pamphlet, than that he ſhould be five Pounds out of Pocket by printing it.*

And now Reader the Secret's out, how do you find yourſelf? You curſe the Author, repent your Bargain, and will never hereafter put your Truſt in Title Pages. I confeſs myſelf acceſſary to this Plot upon you, and indeed

indeed my Pride has in some Measu
gated me to the Deceit: You may
I am a very fond Father, and did
my Brat should lie at the Bookseller
for want of so easy and so necessary
commendation.

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